
UN Human Rights Council
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ID with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion

Delivered by Mr. Yoel Mester,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Israel to the UN in Geneva

Thank you, Mr. President,

We would like to thank the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion for his insightful report. We find that the report contains a useful typology of the various kinds of relations that exist between states and religions. While it does not pretend to offer a "one size fits all" formula for the right state-religion model, it clearly stresses the obligation of states to maintain the right balance between freedom of religion and worship and a range of other civil liberties. The concluding observation that states should "continually strive to create spaces of inclusiveness for all as an active and ongoing endeavor" resonates with us.

Maintaining this balance is quite challenging even for a democracy like Israel, which constantly endeavors to reconcile religious practices with the principles of non-discrimination and equality. It must be extremely difficult to do in those Middle Eastern countries that have a very strong state-religion relationship. And it is probably impossible to do in a radical theocracy like the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. President,

We would like to take this opportunity and ask the Rapporteur how he would advise the human rights bodies and the international community to combat violent extremism and terrorism which are linked to political Islam.

I thank you Mr. President.